LETTERS

ACCC Proposal Contains Fundamental Flaws

Dear Sir:

I read with interest the letter written by CPT Jim Dunivan in the July-August 2002 issue of *ARMOR* magazine. Having served with CPT Dunivan before, I am familiar with his dedication to leader development, as well as his dedication to providing candid feedback. Indeed, his wingmen could always rely on him to draw fire away from us during command and staff meetings.

Be that as it may, I found that the article, "Refocusing the Leader Development Lens," by CPTs Slider and Goin only strengthens CPT Dunivan's arguments against the proposed changes to the Armor Captains Career Course. As I read their article, I reached the same conclusions outlined by CPT Dunivan in his letter to the editor in the same issue. CPTs Slider and Goin rightly point out that, "leadership does not come from a book, but from experience, circumstance, and opportunity." They further outline a plan to give junior leaders the experience they lack at battle school. Although, I'm sure this article outlines the course in a very general way, I noticed fundamental flaws in the first and third phases of the proposed course.

In his letter, CPT Dunivan points out the burdens that the distance-learning phase of the course would place on the student. As a commander, I was significantly challenged to find time to get my lieutenants to any of the required weeklong courses that they needed such as air-load planner, arms room, HAZMAT, NBC, and maintenance supervisor. Additionally, the concept that any SGI would be able to offer "mentoring and coaching" in this setting is laughable. I fear that this environment would lead a student with these competing demands and loyalties to "check the block" to maintain minimum course requirements while still accomplishing their regular duties. Furthermore, the doctrine learned during this phase would "deteriorate" just as quickly as the material taught during the present ACCC. As for Phase II, I cannot agree more to the concept as outlined, and I say, "let's execute!"

Phase III has appeal at first glance. Unfortunately, closer inspection shows that it is flawed in several respects. If the purpose of battle school is to prepare young captains for the rigors of command at the company level, I don't understand how a platoon level focus would benefit them. This concept would be very beneficial to a lieutenant right out of the basic course, but a captain needs to focus on the company and battalion levels of operation. Furthermore, our reorganized tank battalions have only nine maneuver platoons. A typical NTC rotation consists of two maneuver battalions, providing only 18 maneuver platoons for officers to serve as OCs. I do not have a background in personnel management, but a program that graduates only 18 captains a month, and only 180 a year, does not seem like the type of throughput we need to sustain troop strength in line units. Furthermore, if the country were to go to a wartime mobilization, on a scale that our grandfathers did during World War II, this phase utterly falls apart. Additionally, OC certification is a weeklong course, and must be completed prior to the rotational unit arriving for draw week, allowing OCs to linkup with their units. This means that Phase III would actually last between 4 and 5 weeks, not the 2 weeks outlined in the article.

CPTs Slider and Goin then proceed to outline the challenges of training leaders in the emerging C4I systems. In their article, they state that the recent DCXs showed that, "leaders lack confidence in digital C2 and SA systems ... (and) consistently migrated back to traditional analog methods." I find this statement to be very troubling. As I understand it, the soldiers of 4ID had a thorough and arduous train-up prior to the DCXs to ensure that they were in top form and able to demonstrate the systems' true capabilities and limitations. If 4ID did not have enough time to attain competency on these systems, then the systems are far too complex. Units that will field these systems in the future will have a fraction of the time 4ID received to attain competency, and the training they receive in battle school will also deteriorate before the skills are put into practice.

By the time I finished reading the article, I realized that the battle school concept is treating a symptom, not the disease. Why is it that our officers are not receiving the "experience, circumstance, and opportunity" to develop leadership skills? I do not believe that the problem lies with our approach to leader development, but in the way we manage our officers. The best way for a leader to achieve experience is by serving in a leadership position. The current personnel turnover rate causes us to move leaders out of their positions when they achieve competency, not when they achieve mastery. A typical lieutenant spends 6 to 9 months as a platoon leader before they move on to levels of higher responsibility. I was fortunate enough to spend 19 months as a tank platoon leader. During that time, I was able to shoot four gunneries, as well as participate as either OPFOR or BLUFOR in four TF STXs, six company lanes, and seven platoon lanes. This type of experience is unheard of by lieutenants today.

We need to address the problems within the personnel system to ensure that leaders have time to attain mastery in their position. In the 8 July 2002 edition of *Army Times*, an article titled, "How to Fix My Army," outlines MAJ Donald Vandergriff's proposal to overcome this very problem. Although I have not read his book, the article outlines his proposal to regimentalize the Army and to lock in all personnel in battalions for a 4-year period. His suggestion would certainly solve the problem of junior leaders attaining experience, but it is perhaps more transformation than the Army is willing to bear.

I believe that changes to the ACCC curriculum will not solve the problems they are meant to solve, unless we first address the problems in the personnel system. I propose incorporating CPTs Slider and Goin's Phase II into the existing ACCC program. Although the distance-learning concept is intriguing, it is unproven. I can honestly say that the ACCC was the most challenging course I've attended. I quite literally "didn't know what I didn't know" about our doctrine. A firm foundation in doctrine is absolutely essential in leader development. We simply have to know "what right looks like" before we move into the field for experience. Classroom instruction has its merits, and should not be brushed aside in a rush to attain the field experience our leaders should receive while serving in their units. Let's tackle the root problem first: personnel turnover.

CPT DAN ALEXANDER
Medical Holding Detachment
Fort Hood, TX

Current ACCC Curriculum Needs Only Small Changes

Dear Sir:

I am writing to reinforce CPT J.D. Dunivan's letter regarding the coming changes in ACCC. I do acknowledge that I am a student in CPT Dunivan's small group, but it has minimal bearing on my point of view on this issue. My comments are my own.

I agree with CPT Dunivan's points completely, for several reasons:

- ACCC is already too short. With all the taskings placed on students, time spent learning vital company and battalion-level TTPs is increasingly short.

- The value provided by a live small-group instructor far outweighs the benefits that would be provided by "distance learning technology." Nothing beats the daily feedback and interaction provided by an experienced SGI, and no amount of magic virtual technology can replace that. Available technology should be used to enhance the resident ACCC course, not replace it with an inferior death by e-mail program.

- With the commissioning time to captain being further dropped to 38 months, new "shake and bake" captains will need even more training to be proficient. With training opportunities being scarce, new captains having less lieutenant time (10 months less than it was several years ago) are going to be needing quite a bit of extra professional development. The current ACCC provides extra professional development; distance learning will be hard pressed to do so.

- Additionally, thinking that enough ACCC/CABCC "distance learning" time will be provided to a senior 1st lieutenant or junior captain while still at his unit, I think, is a dangerous mistake. Experienced junior officers in a battalion are a valuable asset, much too valuable to not be used by their superiors. So,

what kind of quality training will a new captain get while he is still at his battalion? (Perhaps while he is in a primary staff position, or on numerous taskings.) Taking a new captain out of a unit environment to provide advanced-level professional training is a must.

Finally, I would like to say that the current ACCC, in my opinion, is the finest military course that I have experienced. It is a 95 percent solution, and only small changes would make it better. It is the first and only course that is committed to professional development of officers, and its methodologies are sound. Distance learning followed by a chaotic gauntlet meat grinder will result in the opposite: garbage in, garbage out. If I were a battalion or brigade commander, I would take a personal interest in the products of ACCC/CABCC that the Armor School will be sending me in the future.

BRETT D. LINDBERG
CPT, Armor
Student, SG5N, 3/16 Cav

Don't Transform the Advance Course

Dear Sir:

As I read the July-August 2002 issue of *ARMOR*, I enjoyed the intellectual battles fought between LTC Szabo and LTC Eden, both of whom I have worked for in past positions. However, my stomach turned with each word and concept I read in the article "Refocusing the Leader Development Lens," written by CPT Jason Slider and CPT William Goin. In addition, I wholeheartedly agree with much of CPT J.D. Dunivan's letter to the editor.

In "Refocusing the Leader Development Lens," the authors' concept of a distance learning phase, a 4-week residence phase, and a 2-week O/C phase at a CTC is novel, at best. It seems that the authors are "looking out for number one" and not for the good of the Army with this concept. The authors proclaim that, "Leadership does not come from a book, but from experience, circumstance, and opportunity." And that "leaders will need a more inclusive, broader base of experience." I could not agree more. However, I disagree on their concept of how to attain their goal of producing trained and confident captains ready to lead the nation in battle. What better form is there to gain this broader based experience than the structured small group with a strong, *qualified* captain as the mentor for 5 months? I believe that transforming the advance course by integrating a 4-week distance learning course, from current duty station, followed by a month long resident phase, and then a 2-week CTC rotation as an O/C is not only detrimental to interpersonal communication and team building, but also unit readiness.

The officer that is enrolled in distance learning is exempt from duty in his troop, company, squadron, or battalion...by concept. First, I will argue that this in fact will not be the reality, these officers *will* be used as USR officers, survey officers, special projects officers, casualty assistance officers, or as an assistant S3, S4, or S1, the list goes on. We may say, "No, this will not happen, the officer will be focused on his schooling and that is his priority," but when that officer is still on our books, the unit will not receive a replacement for him until he PCS's. A DL requirement will inevitably conflict with an officer's unit responsibilities. The Army will not provide a replacement to fill an officer's position while he works on his DL requirements, so even a marginally professional officer will be compelled to try and balance both requirements.

The new concept of online schooling does not help to reinforce team building or interpersonal communication skills. This method does reinforce and teach captains that it is all right to lead from behind a desk and issue orders and guidance via e-mail. I have been privileged to command and lead troops in two organizations and will stand on my soap box and say that as a leader, a commander, you must be out with the men, in the motor pool, in the field, checking training; you must share their hardships, take responsibility for their failures and enjoy their success. You learn this by communicating, face to face, with peers and small group instructors in the schoolhouse, on TEWTS, on the PT track, on the intramural field, and heaven forbid, over a beer. A shortened course will eliminate the time necessary for officers from different units to develop the relationships necessary for the cross-fertilization of information and ideas. It is my feeling, and most likely that of current and past SGI's, that a shortened course will deny the SGI the time necessary to build the relationship necessary for successful "coaching, teaching, and mentoring" (a phrase one might arguably replace with the more simple "effective leadership"). I will speculate that it takes a month or so to learn the strengths and weaknesses of each student in the small group. The SGI can then place special emphasis on subjects that the small group needs as a whole, and individual training as needed. The SGI will leave lasting impressions on a young captain. You will see, as the course goes on, the small group will take on the personality of the SGI. That captain will choose to incorporate communication techniques, training strategies, values, and officership that he inadvertently learns from the SGI and his peers throughout his career. Bottom line, SGI's need more than one month to train the future commanders of our troops, companies, and batteries. So, if we continue to place quality officers, such as McLamb, Felty, and Seigrist, in SGI positions, then this is good for the leaders of armor, cavalry, infantry, and the Army.

The article in question and MG Whitcomb's response to CPT Dunivan refers to bringing the Career Course "up to speed" and that "our education system must advance at the pace of the U.S. Army's transformation in doctrine, materiel and equipment, and organization." Well, my brothers, I have 158 pairs of PVS-5s and a pair of M19 binoculars (yes, the same you see strapped around Patton's neck in pictures) in my arms room, how is that for technology and equipment upgrades?

As I remember it, the Armor Captains Career Course was one of the best courses I have ever taken, aside from the Cavalry Leaders Course. The curriculum or the structure of each "volume" was not what made the course a good one. It was sharing ideas, experiences, and lasting friendships made over the 6 months of schooling. To this day, almost 3 years removed, I keep in contact with my SGI and other captains from AC3; not only from the mighty 2-Bravo, but the other small groups as well. We share experiences and ideas and continue to foster new ideas and better concepts for training, warfighting, and family and soldier readiness.

In the words of LTC Calvert, "All of us are better than one of us;" if this all holds true then, all of us in a classroom at Knox for 6 months is better than one of us at home station looking at a computer with a courtesy TDY trip to Knox. I am just a self-proclaimed "knuckle-dragging warfighter" and these are the opinions of a humble cavalryman. I would like to thank LTC Eden, MAJ McLamb, CPT Hollis, CPT Clark, and CPT Schrick for their inputs and ideas.

MIKE KIRKPATRICK
CPT, Armor
Commander
HHT/1/2ACR & IRON/3/2ACR

Approbation for "The Blind Men..."

Dear Sir:

I refuse to believe that our senior leaders think that anything less than cohesive and capable units are necessary to winning the nation's wars with the least cost in lives. Further, I am certain they recognize that such units do not arise through accident or solely through the impact of their leaders, however well trained and capable these individuals may be. No, they know that cohesive and capable units come to be only when their personnel are stabilized, which allows them to train collective go-to-war tasks repetitively, as LTC Tim Reese states in his May-June '02 article, "The Blind Men and the Elephant." If this can be taken as axiomatic, then one may surmise that the reason we appear to do so little to create such units is that we have made a conscious decision not to do so. This is sad, at best, and morally reprehensible, at worst. I enthusiastically second Reese's assertion. Moreover, I believe that our march toward an objective force is woefully imbalanced, if we do not simultaneously pursue a holistic and revolutionary transformation in personnel management. An institution that can produce incredibly forward thinking in materiel, organizations, and to a lesser extent, doctrine, surely ought to do more than "tinker on the margins" with personnel management.

I anticipate that Reese will have detractors. I expect that some will argue that we don't need units able to fight like the OPFOR at our CTCs when our future battlefields and enemy are infinitely more variable and unpredictable than theirs. Such arguments miss the point. Cohesiveness and tasks drilled to become second nature are intangibles that transcend any particular conditions of METT-TC. I have noted a growing legion of such thinkers, who seem to be either apologists for or blind to the downward trend in unit readiness apparent in CTC rotations since immediately after the Gulf War. I observed this trend first-hand as an NTC observer-trainer in the 2 years following Desert Storm and no one I have spoken with since has given me cause to reconsider. Rather than addressing the problem, many now argue that CTCs are simply not as relevant as they once were.

A short time ago, I spent 2 years observing the Israeli army as a liaison officer. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has a fraction of our resources and even more warfighting training distracters, yet it is able to field cohesive and capable units. Its success is not due to better trained individuals, combat experience, or even to higher quality unit training. It succeeds because it values personnel stability and has systemized it over the lifetime of a training cycle, just as Reese proposes. The IDF is more than 80 percent reservist and has a compulsory service requirement that keeps most of the active force young and in service a maximum of 3 years. Another aspect of IDF personnel management worth considering is that its component branches have great autonomy over the service life of their soldiers and officers, up to and including selection for battalion command. This decentralized aspect of personnel management further enhances cohesion and stability.

I diverge from Reese on one point, but my disagreement strengthens, rather than detracts from, his central argument. I do not believe that the Gulf War, in any great measure, affirmed our Army's ability to execute small-unit tactics. Across the land forces, the prevailing tactic was not to engage through fire and maneuver, but rather to stop, engage at maximum stand off, and employ artillery as much as possible. I was assigned to the advanced guard for VII Corps, which employed artillery batteries down to TF level and, at first contact with the Iraqi Republican Guard, brought companies and battalions on line. This was in concert with the prevailing tactic and a strong desire to avoid fratricide, but it was not the employment of company and platoon tactics. In fact, I noted a great reluctance to fire amongst our small units, let alone maneuver. This was, after all, the first combat for these soldiers and their platoon and company commanders. Accounts where small-unit tactics were forced on outfits as a result of chance engagements, such as the Battle of 73 Easting, demonstrate the resoluteness of small units, but not any particular skill in platoon and company maneuver. So, if one wants to argue that battlefield success illustrates the problem to be less than Reese suggests, do not use Desert Storm as evidence.

Soldiers and officers want to train to fight and they want to be a part of a unit that is good at it. I concur with Reese's assessment of our fine professional education system and the soundness of our training doctrine. He also poses the question of whether we have our tactical and operational doctrine correct. I believe we do, but like him, I say this is not relevant if we do not train properly to execute it. When he states, "many have argued that we do not follow our own training doctrine," he has grasped the essential issue. Today, there are tremendous pressures on brigade and battalion commanders to look up, rather than down, and establish the kind of units that are committed to warfighting training as their number one priority. The better commanders resist these pressures, but many others do not.

Not long ago, I read an article in *Army* magazine by a former tank battalion commander. In his article, he states that he would do three or four things differently, including that he wished he had invested more time in training platoons in the field. I was dumbfounded when I read this. I have long believed that battalion commanders should focus on developing strong fighting platoons and, likewise, brigade commanders must necessarily focus on developing their companies. The solution is not simply to carve out and protect time for subordinate units to train, but also provide them the focus and resources to succeed. In my mind, the former battalion commander was admitting at failure in one of his primary reasons for being; "training platoons to fight as they will in war." While dismayed, I was not necessarily surprised. I suspect his shortcoming is true of most battalions and brigades. It takes a special breed of division and corps commander to create a climate where the subjective and often intangible single measure of success is platoons, companies, and brigades ready and able to fight.

Relative personnel stability will go a long way in enabling us to be more faithful to our training doctrine, but even then, there are other endemic problems we must address. If anyone is of the opinion that our technology, resources, superior leadership, or lack of a viable enemy allows us to assume risk in managing personnel in a less-than-perfect way, shame on them. If we say that people are our most important resource, then we ought to behave as though we believe it. A problem is that so much of our attention is focused on the individual, meeting his or her needs or wants, rather than on the larger problem of meeting the individual's real needs by making the units and organizations to which they belong the best they can be. The disaffection among troops and junior company and field-grade officers that had our attention in pre-9-11 days was real. This disaffection is not due to the frailty of generation "X-ers" in our ranks, or to a rise in OPTEMPO as some surveys and researchers suggest. The truth is that soldiers and officers today will perform well and honorably, as well as contentedly, under the worst conditions as long as they believe they are committing themselves to something worthwhile, day in and day out, and as long as the folks above them demonstrate a daily commitment to making this the case. When we, as an Army, do not appear to aspire to the ideals of our training doctrine and to manage personnel in a way that supports it, we will reap the seeds of disaffection that we sow.

LTC KEVIN W. WRIGHT
Fort Leavenworth, KS

SAMS — The Indirect Approach Over the Direct Approach

Dear Sir:

I was sorry to read Bill Lind's remarks about SAMS in the July-August 2002 issue of *ARMOR*. He's right and wrong. Right that it has been more than 10 years since he visited SAMS, and wrong that we teach (or ever taught) attrition warfare as the solution to military problems. I first met Bill Lind at the Marine Amphibious Warfare School in 1981. At the time, he and the tactics instructor, Marine Colonel Mike Wiley, were leading an effort to reform how the students thought about warfare and military operations. Bill's efforts, to include a tremendous elective he taught on maneuver warfare, had a profound effect on how I think about military operations, wrenching me away from attrition warfare and toward maneuver (in the fullest mental and physical meanings of the term). Bill and Mike Wiley's grasp of the theory and history of warfare showed me I had much to learn and served as a catalyst for my decision to attend SAMS.

At SAMS, I learned how to think through military problems and come up with creative, yet workable solutions. Our study of Russian theorists, such as Triandivilov and Tuchachevski, guerrillas such as Mao and Giap, and cavalry officers from Grierson to Patton, confirmed the value of the indirect approach over the direct approach; of multi-dimensional operations over slugging it out in the close fight; and of mental and moral disintegration over physical destruction.

Today, having put maneuver warfare into practice (to the best of my ability) in troop and battalion command, at the NTC, CMTC, and Bosnia, I have arrived at SAMS as the director. In the post-11 September environment, we are teaching students how to think through problems creatively and effectively, not how tactical processes work. As we transform our Army, SAMS is inspiring our officers to be agents of change, much as Bill Lind and Mike Wiley were reformers in the Marine Corps. SAMS is also leading concept

Continued on Page 48

LETTERS continued from Page 5

development for what will be the doctrine of the Objective Force, and it is certainly not attrition warfare. We teach and embrace the science of chaos and theories of complexity, with an understanding that all warfare is asymmetrical and that linear thinking must be a thing of the past (something most cavalrymen knew instinctively long ago). I will contact Bill and invite him out to SAMS. It has been far too long, and I think we still have much to learn from each other.

COL JAMES GREER
Director, SAMS
Fort Leavenworth, KS

Are 19Ks Best Suited for the MGS Platoon?

Dear Sir:

Aside from the interim brigade combat teams (IBCT) at Fort Lewis, Washington, few people are concerned with the Mobile Gun System (MGS) platoon. In the near future, this discussion will expand to many voices when more armor soldiers and officers are assigned to such units. More discussion will emerge when 19K and 19D soldiers leave the IBCT brigades and are absorbed back into a more conventional MOS role. Most likely, NCOs and officers will judge these former-IBCT soldiers and make assessments of their tactical and technical skills, and then judge the training standards in the IBCT brigades.

The MGS platoon belongs to an infantry company composed of 171 personnel. The infantry company has three infantry platoons, a headquarters platoon, a sniper team, a mortar section, a fire support team, and the MGS platoon.

At full strength, an MGS platoon has only one officer, five noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and six soldiers, E-4 or below. Presently, six of the nine platoons have platoon leaders and the average strength is five NCOs and three soldiers.

Each platoon has three vehicles; each vehicle has a driver, a loader, a gunner, and a vehicle commander. Currently, the MGS platoon vehicle is a HMMWV, Series 1121, mounted with a tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missile system. The TOW system is fitted with the improved target acquisition system (ITAS), which allows daytime visual enhancement from 8- to 12-power magnification, and allows night vision enhancement from 8- to 24-power enhancement. To fire the TOW ITAS weapons system, the vehicle must be stationary and the gunner must track the vehicle throughout the missile's flight. The maximum range of the TOW missile is 3,750 meters, and at maximum distance, the missile's flight time is 27 seconds.

The ITAS optics system is the greatest combat multiplier of the TOW ITAS. The same optics system is used on the M1A2 SEP, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle A3, and the long-range acquisition system, but without the same magnification power. Presently, there are no bunker-buster or fire-and-forget missiles available for the TOW system, but the vehicle can be mounted with an M-2 .50 caliber machine gun.

All TOW gunnery training is conducted with MILES, and the live-fire allocation for a TOW company is one round per vehicle, annually.

The vehicle, originally intended for the MGS platoon, is a Stryker with a 105-mm cannon. This vehicle only requires a three-man crew, and the fourth man on each vehicle is a back-up loader; the MGS vehicle has an autoloader. The vehicle can carry 18 ready rounds of 105-mm rounds and shoot at a 6-second cyclic rate. According to a June issue of *Army Times*, this vehicle is currently 4,000 pounds over the Department of the Army's mandated weight, which requires all combat

vehicles in the 3d Interim Brigade Combat Team to be air deployable.

Presently, the MGS platoon can accomplish four missions independently — attack by fire, support by fire, ambush, and convoy escort. With support from an infantry platoon or section, the MGS platoon can operate traffic control points or perform hasty route reconnaissance.

Obviously, the MGS platoon is very different from the traditional tank platoon, especially technically. Until the MGS Stryker variant is fielded, 19Ks do not belong in the MGS platoon. While assigned to an MGS platoon, a 19K misses required training, therefore the chance to improve technically and tactically. Although attack by fire and support by fire are important armor platoon tasks, they are not conducted in the same way due to the survivability of the different vehicles and the tracking and reloading capabilities of the TOW system. This contradictory mission training from an armor platoon is especially important for younger soldiers. In three platoons, there are six soldiers who will have served with MGS for a minimum of three years before a permanent change of station. They will arrive at their next duty station (most likely a conventional armor unit) as sergeants or senior specialists without having shot a Table VIII gunnery, or served only as a loader on one Table VIII gunnery. They have no experience in performing maintenance on an M1 platform, and they do not know how to break track. Although platoon leaders and platoon sergeants have a responsibility to maintain traditional 19K skills, the primary focus is to train personnel to accomplish the tasks of an MGS platoon. By placing these soldiers in the MGS platoon, platoon leaders and platoon sergeants have been put in the contradictory position of training what is necessary to accomplish the platoon's mission, while also training what is important for the individual soldier to succeed in his next unit. This is not an issue that traditional armor platoon leaders and platoon sergeants have had to face.

Not only does this contradictory mission affect a soldier's professional skills after he leaves an MGS platoon, but it also affects retention. By no means are we saying that 19Ks cannot meet the standard in an infantry company. On average, our platoons are the best disciplined in the company. Our NCOs know more about maintenance and motor pool operations than most infantry NCOs. But, 19Ks — especially those who are coming to these platoons from other units — have different ideas of combat: they stay mounted, they do not see much use in ruck marching, and they like to shoot big guns. Is it important that soldiers enjoy what they do? Not necessarily. But, if you ask an armor or cavalry officer to take command of the brigade laundry platoon, he will perform to the best of his abilities; after a year or two he might rethink his interest in the Army.

As MGS platoon leaders, we feel that 19Ks are not needed in the MGS platoons, and to keep them there is doing them and the armor community a disservice.

Our first recommendation is to replace 19Ks with 11-series soldiers or 19Ds. Without need for much explanation, 11-series soldiers are more at home in the infantry company than 19Ks and, like those in the brigade antitank company, are able to perform all the same tasks as the MGS platoons. Also, 11-series soldiers can train in areas that 19K soldiers cannot, such as the expert infantry badge.

Another option we feel is viable for manning the MGS platoon is the 19D. Two of the three of us spent time as platoon leaders of a RECCE scout platoon, and our opinion is that 19Ds are better suited for the day-to-day operations of an infantry company. They are more accustomed to dismounted operations. The traditional 19D tasks do not differ much from those of the MGS soldiers, especially in the route reconnaissance missions. Many 19Ds understand the TOW system and how to fight from a HMMWV, training they may have received in past units, and training that may prove valuable in their next units. Especially for those 19Ds serving in a reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition squadron, their working knowledge of MOUT operations further enhances the effectiveness of a platoon that is designed to support a company that fights in this environment. Eventually, 19Ks will have a place in infantry companies. When the MGS platoon can train for precision gunnery (MOUT or non-MOUT) on a biannual schedule and can effectively support the infantry with the proper equipment, no soldier will fulfill this role like a tanker.

Another recommendation that will maintain the effectiveness of the MGS platoon is to have armor officers, rather than infantry officers, as platoon leaders. Based on training received at the Officer Basic Course, armor lieutenants have a better understanding of the mounted mission than infantry lieutenants. This is not true of infantry officers as a whole — armor officers do not have the market on maneuver warfare.

The recommendations we have made are based only on our personal experiences. We feel that at present, 11-series soldiers or 19Ds better meet the mission requirements of the MGS platoon. Once the platform and equipment allow the MGS platoon to support the infantry according to its original design, 19Ks will have a place. Until then, placing 19Ks in this role negatively affects the armor community. Future MGS and RECCE officers will be the final decisionmakers as the IBCT proves its effectiveness during real-world deployment. Armor branch has an important role in the success of these units, and as armor officers, we can make it more successful.

1LT JOSH JONES,
1LT WALT REED,
and 1LT JOHN WHEELER
Fort Lewis, WA

Memories of the Huertgen Forest

Dear Sir:

Captain Sullivan's article in the May-June 2002 issue of *ARMOR* on Huertgen Forest brought back many unhappy memories for me.

At that time, I had just turned 20 and was a member of CCR of the 5th Armored Division, which was the first U.S. unit to breach the Siegfried Line at the Our River, between Luxemburg and Wallendorf, Germany, between the 15th and 25th of September, 1944. This is where I earned a Purple Heart from a shrapnel wound.

In Huertgen, CCR was given the mission to attack, seize, and hold the towns of Huertgen and Kleinhau, then Brandenburg and Bergstein. CCR lead elements consisted of: 10th Tank Battalion, minus B Company and plus A and C Companies from 47th Armored Infantry Battalion, plus Company C, 628 Tank Destroyer Battalion; and 47th Armored Infantry Battalion plus B Company, 10th Tank Battalion, plus 1 platoon, Company C, 22d Armored Engineer Battalion, minus the A and C Companies from above.

The weather was miserable with rain, sleet, snow, and freezing cold, causing many non-operational casualties such as trench foot and pneumonia. The roads went from bad to worse, and tracks either slipped off the side, hit a mine, or were hit by enemy direct or indirect fire.

The attack started on 29 November 1944, and from CCR's after action report at the end of the day on 6 December 1944, the married 10th Tank Battalion Task Force had 10 operational tanks, 70 infantrymen and 1 tank destroyer. CCR achieved its objective, but at a big cost. So much for armor in Huertgen Forest!

I personally was a crewman on a tank destoyer of Company "C," 628 TD Battalion and was one of the lucky ones, since we only were disabled after hitting a mine. When we were relieved, I went to a hospital for 10 days with trench foot. When I was released, I went back to my company, which had been reconstituted and was attached to a parachute regiment of the 82d Airborne Division on the north side of the Bulge.

After the Bulge, we reverted to CCR control and ended up on the Elbe River, the closest U.S. unit to Berlin. There we were stopped because of the Yalta Agreement.

Armor proved to be highly effective in winning World War II, despite the problems encountered in the Huertgen Forest. CCR received a Presidential Unit Citation for the Huertgen Forest action and a French Croix de Guerre for action at Walendorf, Germany. I am proud to have been a member of CCR, 5th Armored Division, and a small of our country's proud military history.

ROBERT W. HERMAN
LTC, Armor, Ret.
Folsom, CA